

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) A device for storing plate-shaped substrates the device comprising:

a plurality of consecutive storage elements stacked in a stacked direction, each storage element accommodating at least one substrate;

a means for depositing a substrate in each of the storage elements;

a tool having a first storage element contact surface and a second storage element contact surface, said first storage element contact surface engaging a first storage element;

a moving means for moving said tool relative to said stacked storage elements, said moving means moving said tool with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element such that said second storage element contact surface engages a second storage element adjacent said first storage element, whereby said tool divides said plurality of stacked storage elements into an upper stack of storage elements and a lower stack of storage elements, said first storage element being located at a spaced location from said second storage element when said second storage element contact surface contacts said second storage element, said moving means moving said tool with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element and with said second storage element contact surface engaged with said second storage element such that said second storage element is located at a spaced location from said upper stack of storage elements and said lower stack of said storage elements; and

a stacking area defined by an area of one storage element in contact with another

storage element in a stacked formation.

2. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the storage elements are stacked directly on one another.

3. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the storage elements are handled at their stacking area for producing an increased distance between two consecutive storage elements, whereby one of the storage elements is accessible for a deposit or a removal of said substrate.

4. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein said moving means moves said tool such that a distance between one storage element and another storage element is increased.

5. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the storage elements are self-contained storage rings.

6. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the means for depositing comprises inwardly and upwardly directed projections for engaging said substrate such that said substrate is deposited above a ring section of the storage element.

7. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 6, wherein the projections have a horizontally directed contact surface.

8. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein storage elements arranged on top of one another form an at least laterally enclosed space.

9. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 8, further comprising means for producing clean air such that a clean room atmosphere is produced in the enclosed space.

10. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 9, wherein said means for producing clean air creates an overpressure in an interior of the device.

11. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 8, further comprising means for discharging a predetermined amount of gas from within an interior of the device in an outwards direction.

12. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, further comprising means for increasing stability and/or positioning accuracy of superimposed storage elements.

13. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 12, further

comprising a centering means formed on one of the storage elements, which centering means cooperates with a centering means of a consecutive storage element in the stacked direction for increasing the stability.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the two contact surfaces of the tool are offset against one another in the stacked direction of the storage elements.

16. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein a relative mobility of the two contact surfaces is provided.

17. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the tool is movable in a plane parallel to surfaces of the substrates.

18. (Currently Amended) A transport container for transporting substrates in a lockable space, the transport container comprising:

a plurality of storage elements stacked consecutively one on top of another to form a transport storage container structure, each storage element receiving a substrate via a substrate depositing means, each storage element having a stacking area defined by one of

said storage elements in contact with another storage element in a stacked location; and  
a locking means for sealing said transport storage container structure such that clean room conditions are maintained in a space of said transport storage container structure defined by said plurality of storage elements.

19. (Currently Amended) A method for handling a disk-shaped substrate that is used in the manufacture of semiconductor components, the method comprising:

providing a tool having a first portion with a first contact surface and a second portion with a second contact surface;

providing a stack of separatable storage elements;

selecting one of said storage elements for removal from said stack of separatable storage elements to define a selected storage element;

moving said stack of separatable storage elements such that said tool is positioned in an area adjacent said selected storage element, said tool engaging one of said storage elements located adjacent said selected storage element such that said first contact surface is in contact with said adjacent storage element;

moving said tool with said first contact surface in contact with said adjacent storage element such that said second contact surface engages said selected storage element, said adjacent storage element being located at a spaced location from said selected storage element when said second contact surface engages said selected storage element;

moving said tool with said first contact surface in contact with said adjacent storage

element and with said second contact surface in contact with said selected storage element such that said selected storage element is located at a spaced location from another adjacent storage element, whereby said selected storage element is separated from said stack of separatable storage elements.

20. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein a pitch of said upper stack of storage elements and said lower stack of storage elements is not changed when said tool releases one of said storage elements.

21. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, further comprising a sealing means for pressing one storage element against another storage element such that said storage elements are sealed.

22. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, further comprising a means for discharging nitrogen into the device.

23. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 22, further comprising a cover plate and a lower bottom plate a space in which said plurality of storage elements is located, said sealing means, said cover late, said lower bottom plate and said nitrogen providing clean room conditions within said space.

24. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 18, wherein said locking means presses one storage element against another storage element such that said storage elements are sealed.

25. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 18, wherein said transport storage container structure has a cover plate and a lower bottom plate to define a clean room space, said plurality of storage elements being located within said clean room space.

26. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with claim 19, wherein said tool separates said stack of separable storage elements into an upper stack of storage elements and a lower stack of storage elements such that the pitch of said upper stack of storage elements and said lower stack of storage elements is not changed when said tool releases said selected storage element.